

## Visitors Guide to the U.S. Capitol



The Capitol building is a monument, a working office building, and one of the most recognizable symbols of representative democracy in the world. Below is information about what you should expect during your visit.

Tours of the Capitol are available through my office Monday through Friday 9:00am-2:30pm. These tours are led by my staff members, who offer historical information about the Capitol building and viewings of the House of Representatives and Senate Galleries when available. Tours begin and end at my main office in 511 Hart Senate Office Building (HSOB). On Wednesdays when the Senate is in session, Senator Tester, Congressman Daines, and myself host Montana Coffee in 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building (DSOB). On these days, tours will start from 215 DSOB at 9:00am and end in my main office (511 HSOB). Tours can also be arranged with the Capitol Visitor Center which are given by Capitol Visitor Center guides Monday through Saturday from 8:30am-4:30pm.

Please pay careful attention the list of prohibited items. To avoid losing something of value and to expedite security checks, my office is more than happy to hold any of your belonging, including purses, backpacks, or jackets. The tour is completely indoors-all you need to bring is your camera! You are welcome to take anything else as long as it is not on the prohibited items list. Since the Capitol is a working office building, please dress and behave in a manner respectful to this business environment.



**When you must request this tour by:** One to two weeks' notice is appreciated, but staff will try to accommodate all requests.



**What you should have with you upon arriving for the tour:** There is nothing you specifically need other than your camera! My staff giving the tour will provide you with Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) passes, gallery passes, and CVC movie admission tickets. For tours conducted by CVC guides, you will be sent a confirmation page.



*For tours given by my office:*

**Location:** 511 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510

**Phone:** (202) 224-2651 or toll-free (800) 332-6106

**Exact Location:** Prepare to come directly to my office, located in 511 HSOB, unless your tour is set to start from Montana Coffee, in which case the tour starts from 215 DSOB and ends in 511 HSOB. The Hart Building is located at the corner of 2nd Street and Constitution Avenue NE. *Please plan for about 15 minutes of wait time to enter the building as lines at entrances may be longer.*

*For tours given by Capitol Visitor Center guides:*

**Location:** East Capitol and 1st Streets NE, Washington, DC 20002

**Exact Location:** The CVC is located beneath the East Front Plaza of the U.S. Capitol at East Capitol and 1st Streets NE. When arriving at the CVC, you will be on the upper level. Please take the escalators or stairs to the ground floor level and go to either information desk (North or South) and CVC employees will process your ticket information.



**Nearest Metro:**

*Capitol South-Orange/Blue Line, located at 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE between C and D Streets SE.*

*Union Station-Red Line, located at 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE and Massachusetts Avenue NE. This stop is closest to the Hart Building.*



**Duration:** Anywhere from 1 to 3 hours depending on how long the lines are and what you choose to see.



Please turn off and do not use your cell phone or other electronic devices during the orientation film and while touring the Capitol. **Do not touch** exhibits or artwork-the oils and acids even in clean hands can cause irreparable damage to works of art. Before entering the Capitol Visitor Center, all visitors are screened by a magnetometer, and all items that are permitted inside the building are screened by an x-ray device. Prohibited items will be confiscated.

**Prohibited Items:**

- Knives of any size (including pocketknives)
- Perfumes
- Aerosol containers
- Pointed objects (knitting needles, letter openers, nail files, etc.)
- Any bag larger than 18" wide x 14" high x 8.5" deep
- Cans and bottles (full or empty)
- Electric stun guns, martial arts weapons or devices
- Food or beverages of any kind
- Guns, replica guns, ammunition, and fireworks
- Mace and pepper spray
- Non-aerosol spray
- Razors and box cutters

**Accepted Items:**

- Cameras (must be checked before entering the House and Senate galleries)
- Cell phones (must be checked before entering the House and Senate galleries)
- Purses
- Keys
- Wallets
- Jackets

- **Backpacks**
- **Extra shoes**

Please limit what you carry on tours to speed up the process of going through several security checkpoints and metal detectors. These measures are in place for everyone's security.



**Dining Options:** The Capitol Visitor Center Restaurant is on the lower level of the CVC and is open 8:30am-4:00pm Monday through Saturday. Freshly made soups, salads, specialty entrées, pizzas, sandwiches, desserts, and beverages that reflect the diverse bounty of America are available for purchase at the Restaurant. Meal vouchers are available ahead of time for groups of 25 or more.

Other dining options include (hours subject to change during recess):

- **Dirksen North Servery**  
NW corner of the basement of the Dirksen Building  
7:30am-3:00pm, Monday to Friday  
(202) 224-2263
- **Dirksen South Buffet**  
South side of the basement of the Dirksen Building  
11:30am-2:30pm, Monday to Friday  
(202) 224-4249
- **Dirksen South Convenience**  
South side of the basement of the Dirksen Building  
8:00 am-4:00 pm, Monday to Friday  
(202) 228-2810
- **Hart Senate Chef**  
In the Dirksen/Hart Ground Floor Connecting Corridor  
8:00am-6:30pm, Monday to Friday  
(202) 224-4587
- **Russell Carry-Out**  
NW corner of the basement of Russell Building  
7:30am-5:00pm, Monday to Friday  
(202) 224-8083



**Gift Shop:** The Senate Gift Shop is located in the basement corridor connecting the Dirksen and Russell Office Buildings and is open 9:00am-4:30pm. The Capitol Visitor Center gift shops are located on the upper level of the CVC near the tunnel to the Library of Congress and are open 8:30am-4:30pm. The CVC Gift Shops feature a unique selection of merchandise inspired by the Capitol's art and architectural treasures, fun and educational gifts, books, jewelry, and exciting custom-designed products unavailable anywhere else.



**Accessibility:** The entire tour is mobility accessible with accessible walkways connecting the Russell Senate Office Building to the Capitol in addition to the underground train. The House and Senate galleries are accessible to mobility-impaired persons with advance notice.



**Frequently Asked Questions:** Below are several frequently asked questions related to this tour.

1. *Are we able to take cameras and video recorders on the tour?*

Yes! We encourage you to bring your cameras and document your trip. However, when going to the galleries all electronics must be checked in until you are out of the gallery viewing rooms.

2. *How long is the tour?*

Your tour can last anywhere from one to three hours depending on what you would like to see, how long the lines are, and how much time you choose to spend in the galleries. If you have a time constraint, or want to be sure something of special interest is included, please let your tour guide know, and they will do his/her best to try to accommodate you.

3. *What do the lights on the clocks mean?*

A series of buzzers heard around the Capitol and in the Senate office buildings tell Senators and staff what is happening on the Senate Floor and summons Senators for votes and quorum calls.

Lights on clocks inside Senate offices correspond with the number of buzzer rings sounded. The red light remains lit at all times while the Senate is in session.

The Legend of the Bells

1 long ring: Sounds at the hour of convening

1 ring: Yeas and Nays

2 rings: Quorum Call

3 rings: Call of Absentees

4 rings: Adjournment or Recess (End of Daily Session)

5 rings: Seven and half minutes remaining on Yea or Nay vote

6 rings: Morning Business Concluded (lights cut off immediately)

Recess: During daily session (lights stay on during period of recess)

4. *When we visit the Senate gallery, what will the Senate be doing?*

Depending on when you visit the Senate gallery, Senators could be debating current legislation, voting upon a bill, or processing routine business. The Senate tends to have periods of business on the floor punctuated with breaks to allow Senators to reach the floor to make a speech or to work out details for future proceedings. If there is nothing actively happening, or there is a pause in debate, visitors are still welcome to enter the gallery and see where the Senate meets. Our office will be able to answer your questions about what is happening in the Senate when you arrive for your tour. You can also see the current day's floor schedule at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) on the right hand side of the page under the "Floor Schedule" section.

Should you have any further questions about a Capitol tour, please visit <http://www.visitthecapitol.gov/visit/>, or contact my main office at (202) 224-2651.